

Lesson 16: How to Create a Landscape Design

This lesson was our favorite new technique to learn. We remembered watching countless videos about how to create this design without ever learning the steps. After learning how to create this effect, the process became self-evident. Problem is, is that there's a ton of videos showing how it's done but missing the critical explanations of why and how. We hope you like this effect as much as we do.

Before we start, we think it's important to think about what we're about to do. If you're new to this effect, then do a casual glance at these steps and get on with the lesson. After you've had some experience working through this lesson, come back to this page, and re-read these steps. Maybe they're helpful.

Landscape designs have these three basic characteristics:

1. They're made up of lines that represent land curvatures (hills, mountains).
2. They're made up of Monochromatic colors starting with the darkest and fading away to the lightest.
3. They have shadows or lit spaces based on the position of the sun.

Quick overview of the steps involved (Steps 6 & 7 will not be covered in this lesson):

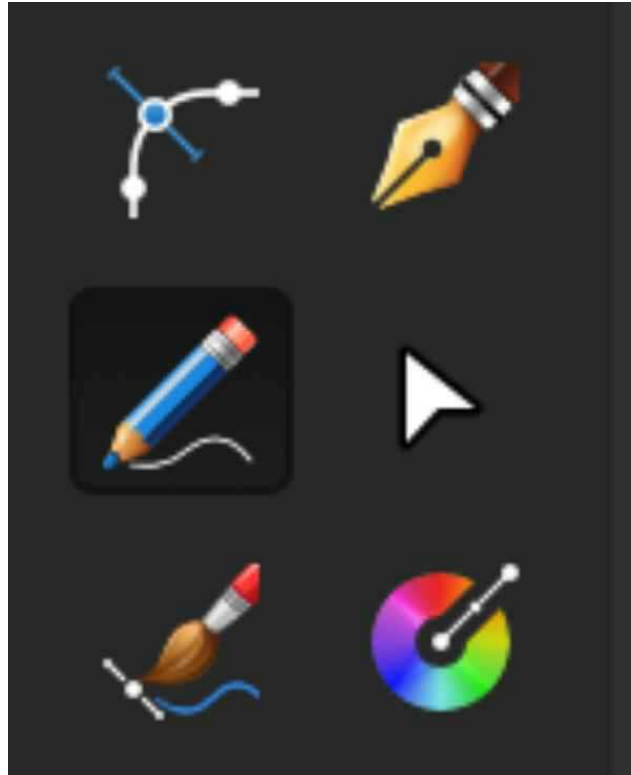
1. Use the **Pencil Tool** and *draw* the **contours** you want.
2. *Count* how many **main colors** you'll need (e.g. three mountains + sky = 4).
3. *Choose* a **color** (like Red) and write down the Monochromatic color codes for each one (RGB Hex codes or CMYK values).
4. *Click* on **each contour** and color it.
5. *Position* the **layers** correctly in the Layers Panel.
6. *Add* **gradients** to create more depth.
7. *Import* **shapes** like trees & silhouettes of shapes to be more creative.

Ready to start creating?

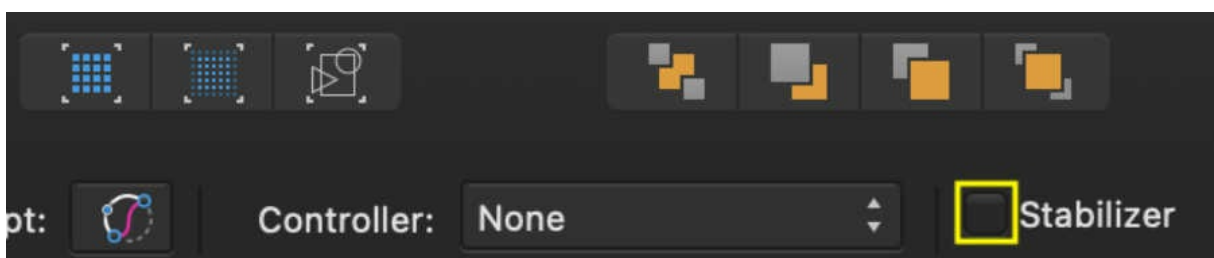
Create a **New Document** to these specifics:

- **Web - CD Cover Digital Release**
- **Page Height: 1500 px**
- **Transparent background** (*unchecked*)

Click on the **Pencil Tool** so it's activated.

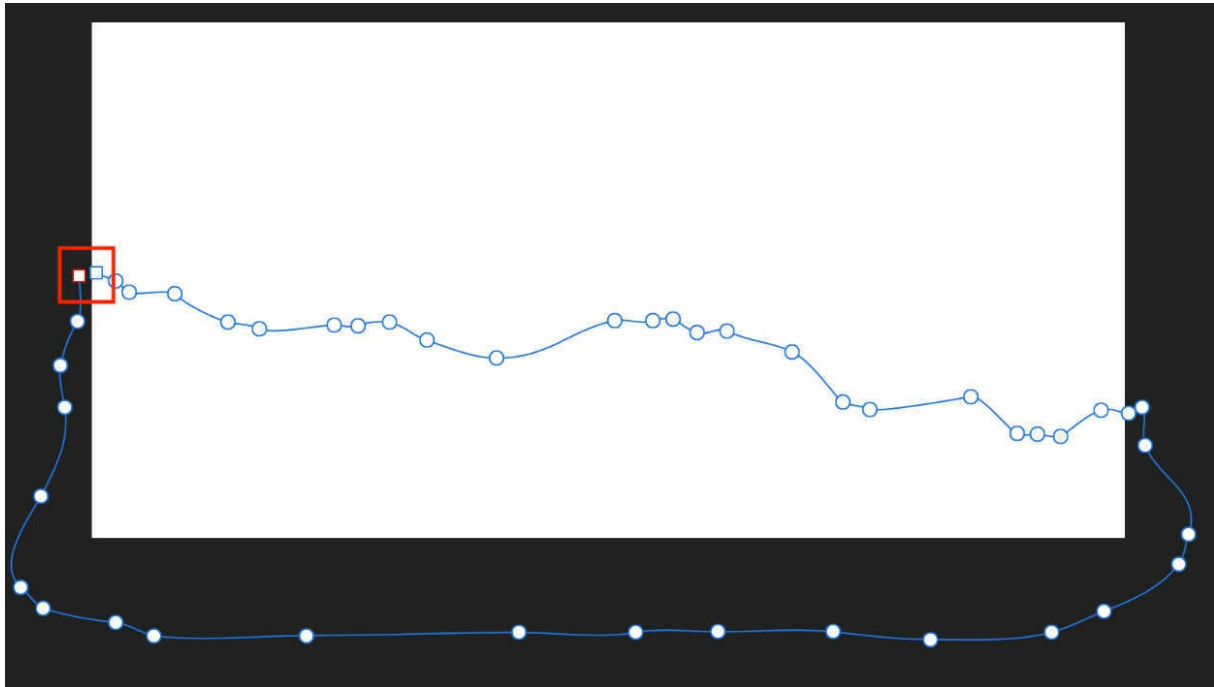


Go to the **Contextual Toolbar** and *uncheck* **Stabilizer** (yellow rectangle). We don't want to use the string-help tool that makes it easy to create smooth lines. We don't want smooth lines here because real hills and mountains aren't made up of smooth lines.



Draw the **contour** you want to create. The square nodes (inside the red

rectangle) represent our starting & ending points. It's important that you draw the line outside the document and wrap around again next to the starting point in order to create a shape that can be colored. If you don't do this, then Designer won't know what you want and will only color the stroke of your line.

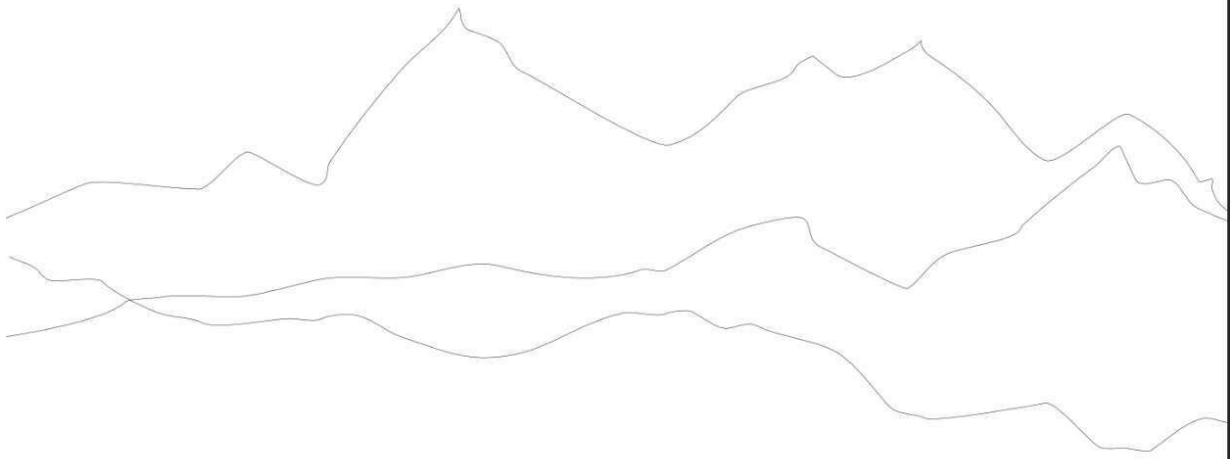


Draw the **second contour shape** following the instructions from the previous step. Take your time. This lesson is as much about discovery as it is about any specific effect.

Draw the **third contour shape** again following the same instructions as before. Use your imagination and create something awesome.

Note: It's ok if the 2nd or 3rd contour shape is under the lines of the previous contours. This is actually a good thing (see 2nd contour shape below for reference) because it creates a sense of depth.

This is what our image looks like now after we've drawn out our three contoured shapes.



Count how many **colors** we need. The answer is four (three mountains and one sky).

Choose which **color** you'll use. For this lesson, we've decided to use the base color of Red because friends of ours are currently in Mexico and they've been around reddish-looking mountains. But feel free to use any base color you want.

These are the RGB Hex codes we'll be using:

- 1st Contour **#550000**
- 2nd Contour **#820000**
- 3rd Contour **#BE0000**
- Sky Area **#D6AFAF**

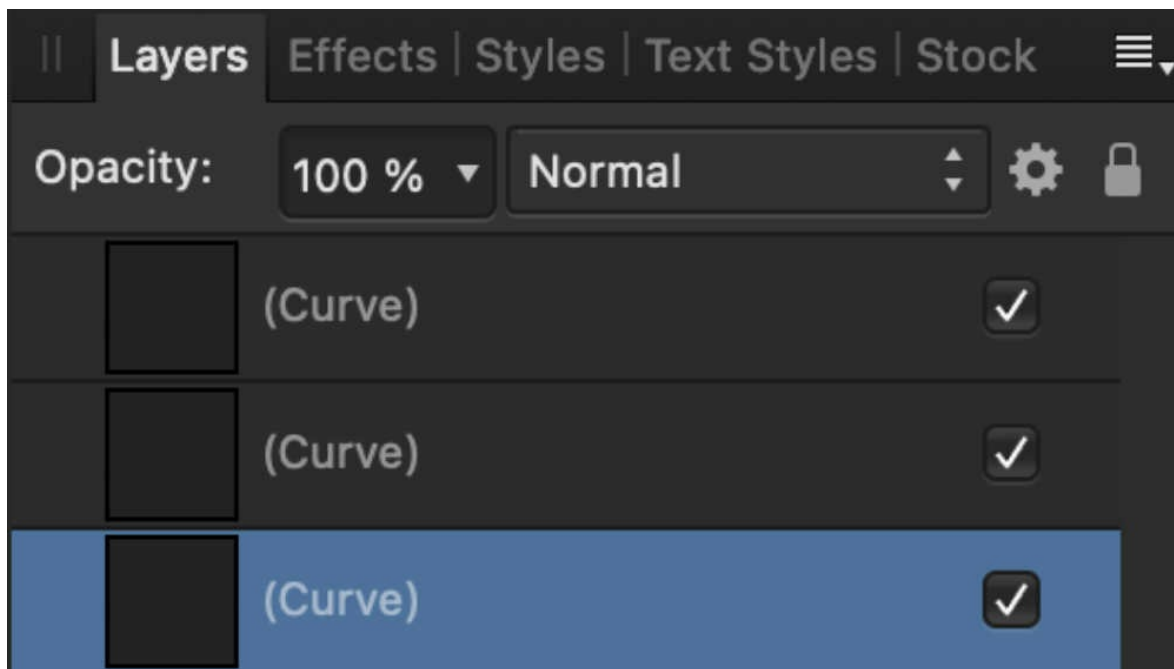
Note: Can you tell how we know the first three contours are only made up of the color Red? It's because the first two numbers of the Hex code's six numbers represent Red. The middle two numbers represent Green and the last two numbers represents Blue. So, if the first three contours Hex codes are only made up of the first two numbers, then we know it is a shade of Red and there's not Green or Blue added to this color.

Now is the time to add color to our shapes. This is a bit tricky because the first contour we drew is located at the bottom of the Layers Panel, but since it's the foreground color of the document, it will need to be moved to the top

of the Layers Panel after we color it. So, basically, all of the layers are in the exact opposite positions they need to be. We'll show you how to do this step-by-step to remove any confusion.

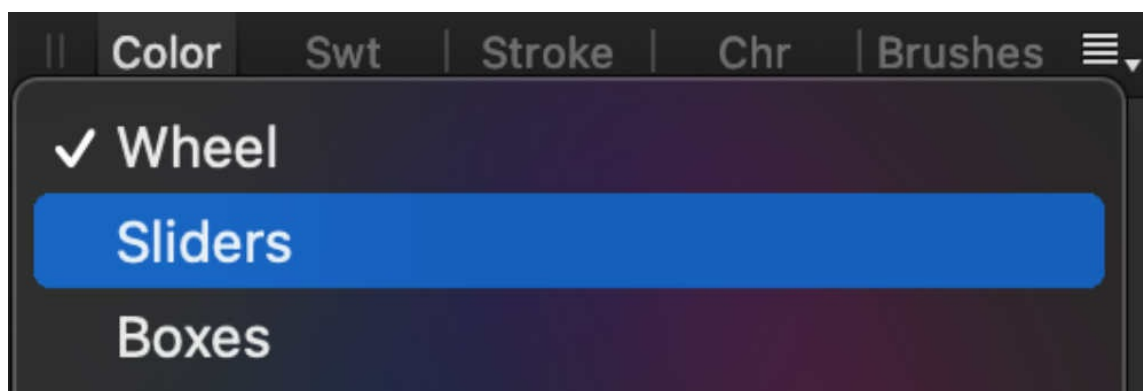
Ready?

*Click on the **bottom Curve layer** so it's highlighted in blue.*

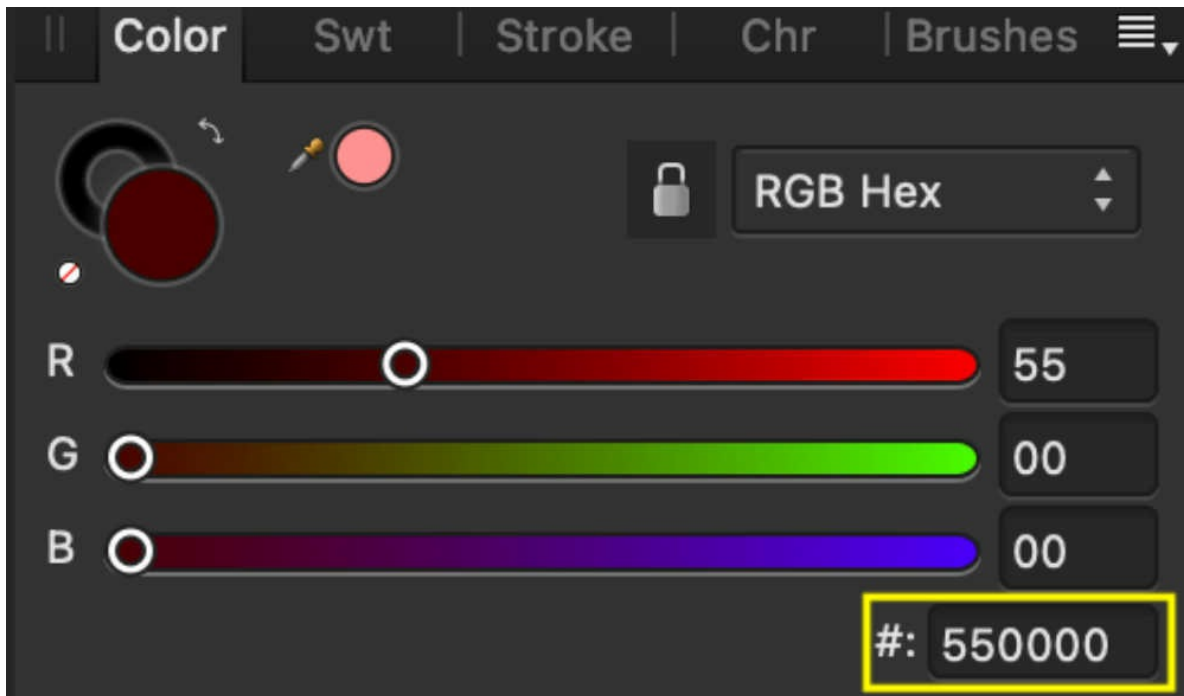


*Go to the **Colors Panel** and click on its **Menu icon** (the "burger"). You should know where this icon is by now.*

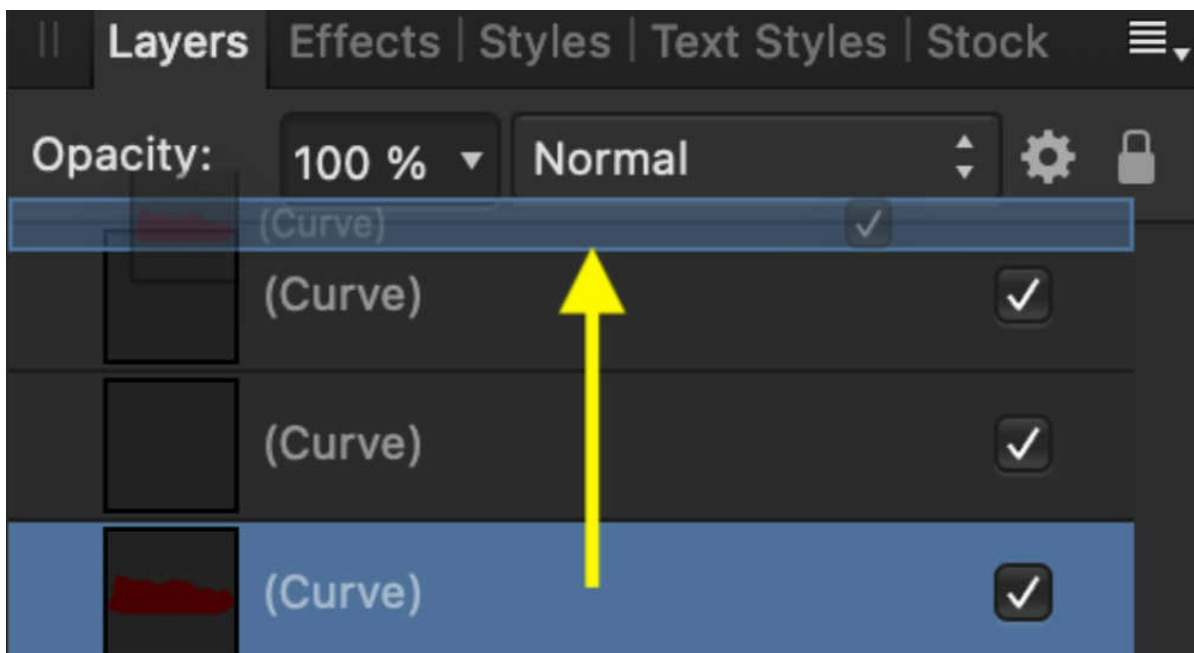
*Click on **Sliders**.*



*Go to the **Hex code value box** and type **550000**.*



Click & drag the **bottom layer** to the top of the Layers Panel (see yellow arrow for this action). Make sure the left-side of the ethereal layer you're moving is all the way to the left as it is in this screenshot.



Note: If we had more than three Curve layers, we'd probably rename each layer, so it'd be easier to know which layer is which. To rename a layer, simply double-click on it and type the name you want (e.g. Front Contour).

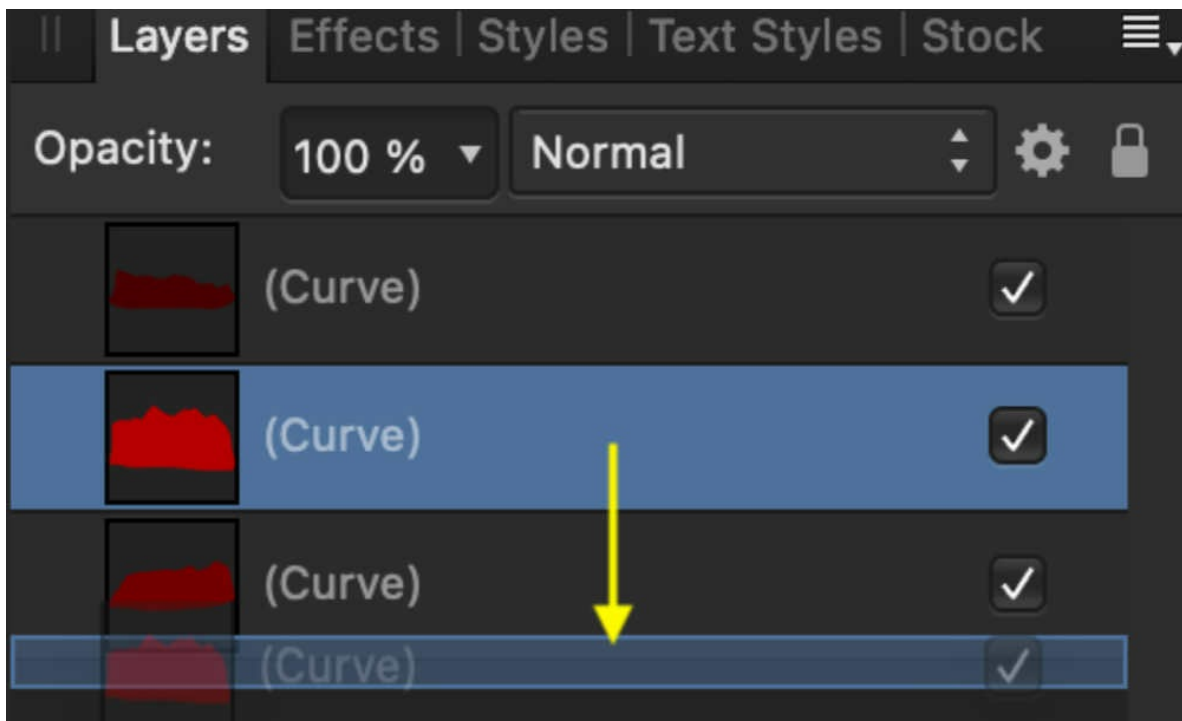
Click on the **bottom layer** so it's highlighted in blue. This used to be the middle layer, but now it's the lowest because we moved the previously lowest layer to the top of the Layers Panel.

Go back to the **Colors Panel** and type **820000** in the RGB Hex value box.

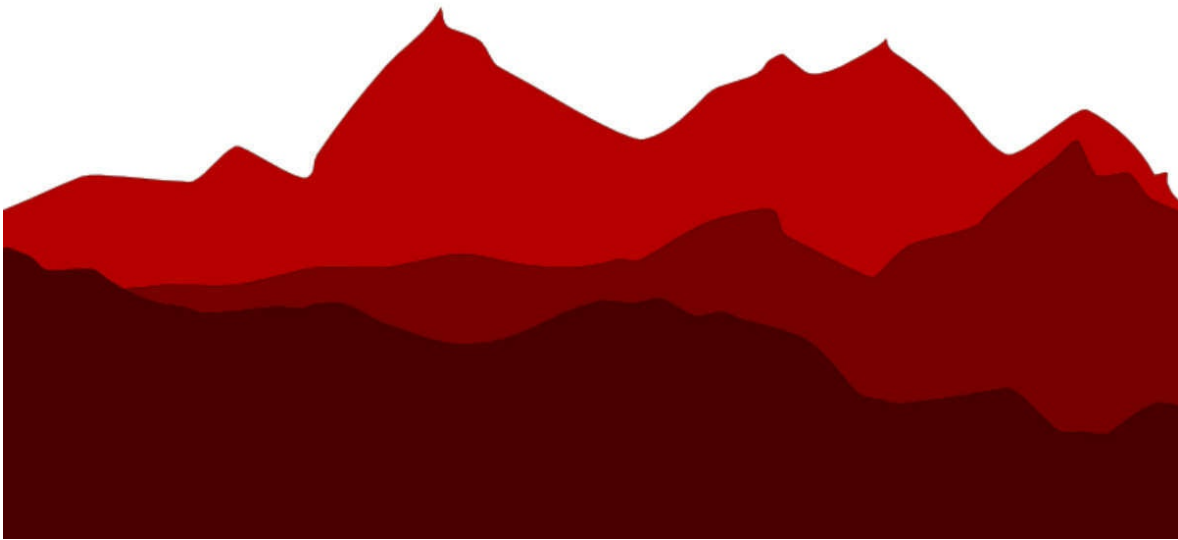
Note: Because we are only working with three layers, this middle layer doesn't need to be moved because it's already in its correct (layer) position.

Click on the **middle layer** (the background Mountain layer) and go back to the **Colors Panel** and type **BE0000** in the RGB Hex value box.

Click & drag this **middle layer** to the bottom of the Layers Panel. Since it's not the lowest layer only the parts of its shape that are revealed in our document are the tops of its mountains.



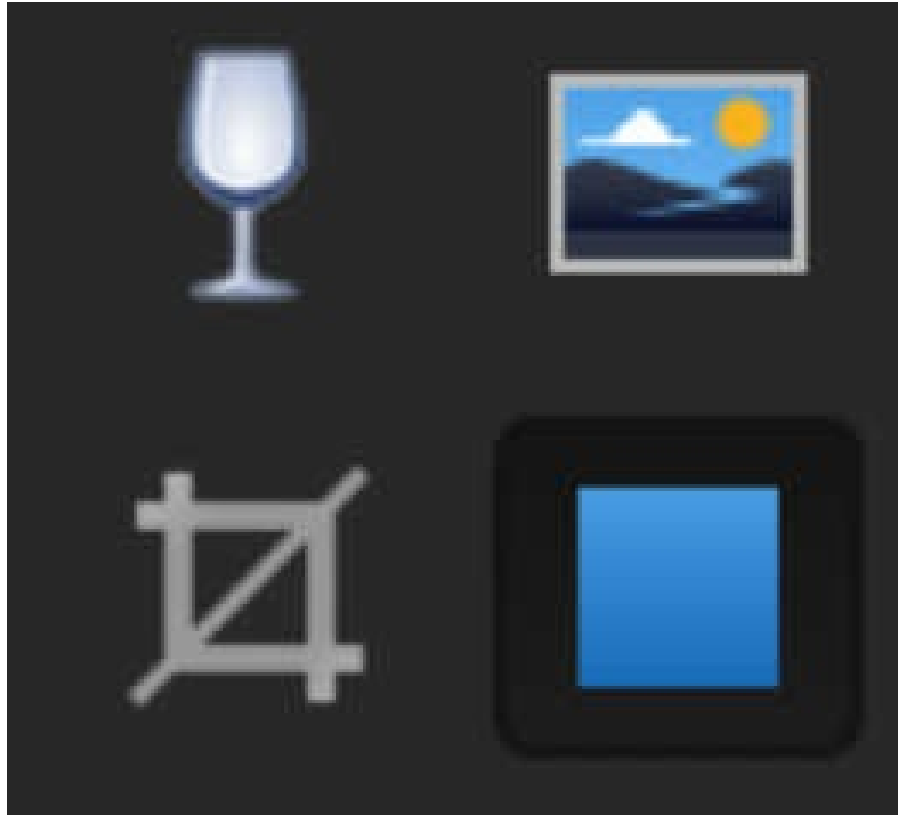
This is what our document looks like now after all three contour layers are in their correct positions.



It's looking great. Now, let's add the sky to it and maybe some clouds. If we're feeling crazy, we'll try adding some snow to the tips of the mountains.

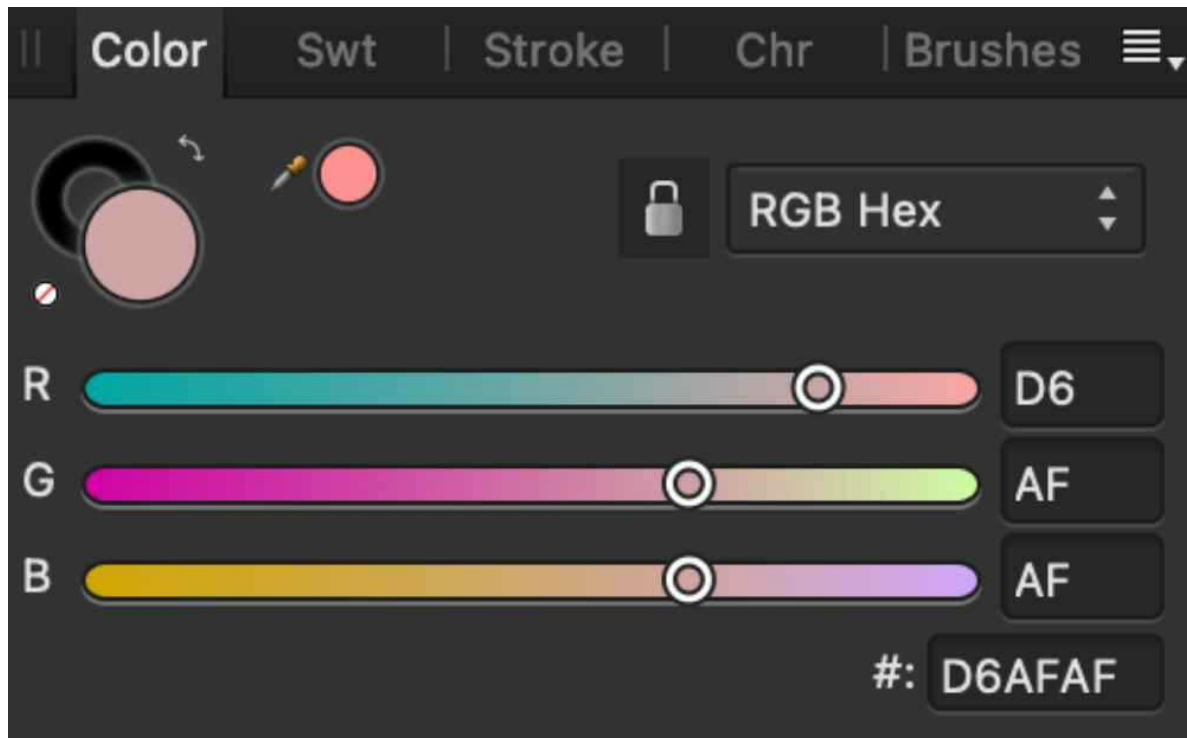
Let's continue.

Click on the **Rectangle Tool** so it's activated. You can tell a tool is active because its icon will look depressed & darkened compared to its neighbors.

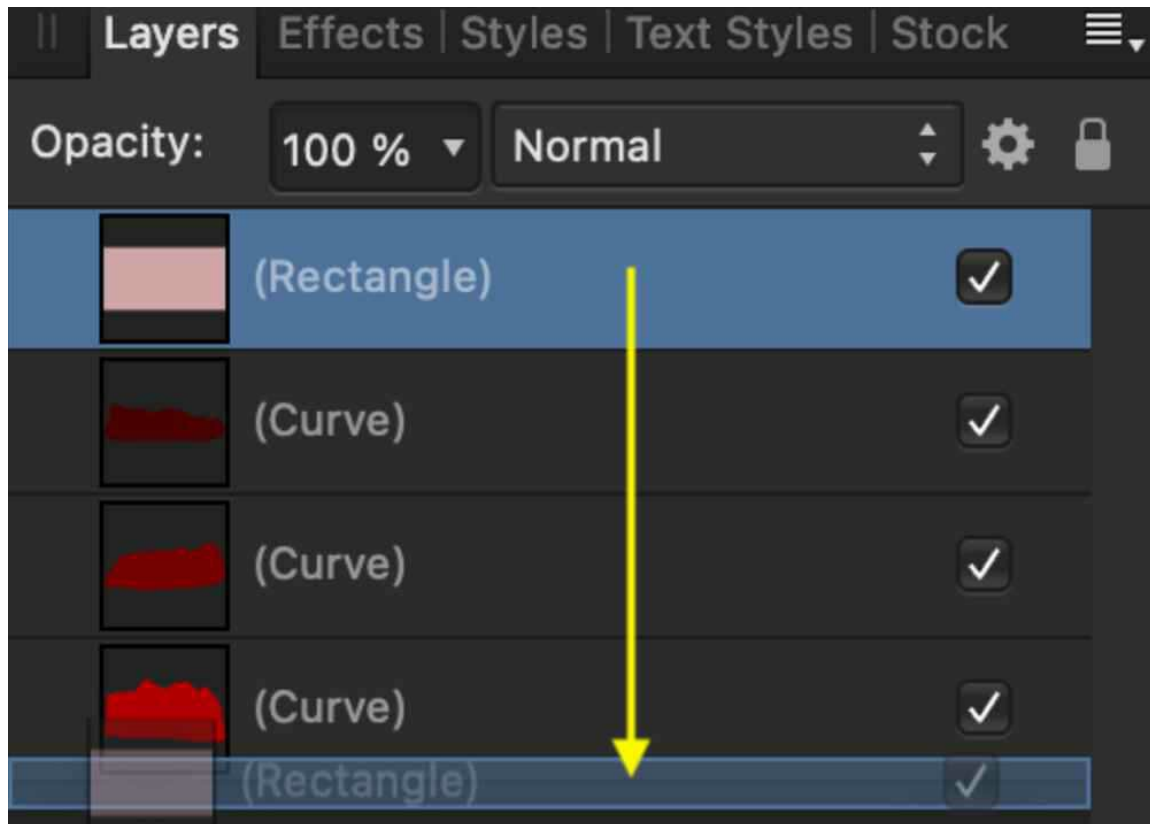


*Click & drag a **rectangle** over the entire document. It will be the same red we used to color our last layer.*

*Go back to the **Colors Panel** and type **D6AFAF** in the RGB Hex value box. This color is a salmon-red. We like it because it reminds us of a day right before sunset.*



*Click & drag the **Rectangle layer** to the bottom of the Layers Panel so the only part of it we see is what our other three layers aren't covering with their shapes (e.g., the sky).*



Now that we have a nice-looking sky, let's add a few clouds.

Click on the **Pencil Tool** and draw out **three clouds** wherever you want. We'll draw ours on the left, center, and right areas. If you want to draw a cloud behind the mountains, go right ahead. All you'll have to do is move its cloud layer under the bottom layer on top of the Rectangle layer.

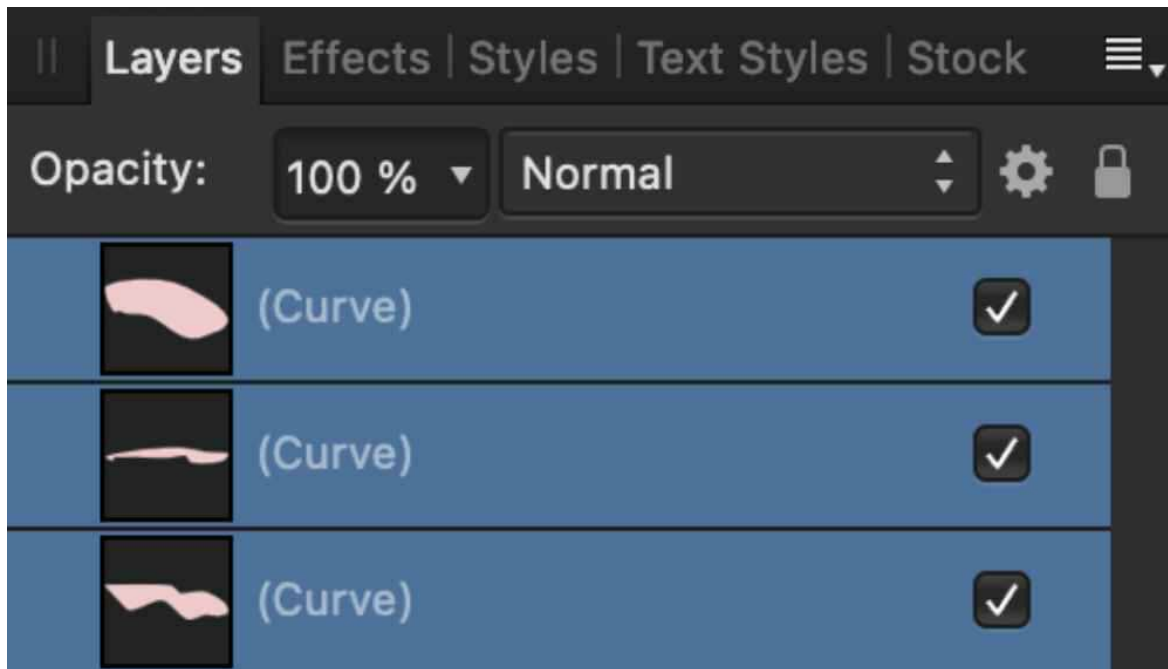
Note: Don't worry about not being perfect, that comes with time and experience. We've done hundreds of these landscape designs and we're still not perfect. After you learn these basics, then you can experiment with adding more contours and then filling them with trees and other objects. Creativity has no bounds.

Here are the cloud shapes we drew and colored them a light red (#F2D1D1). We didn't want them to be white because it would clash too much with the salmon-red sky.

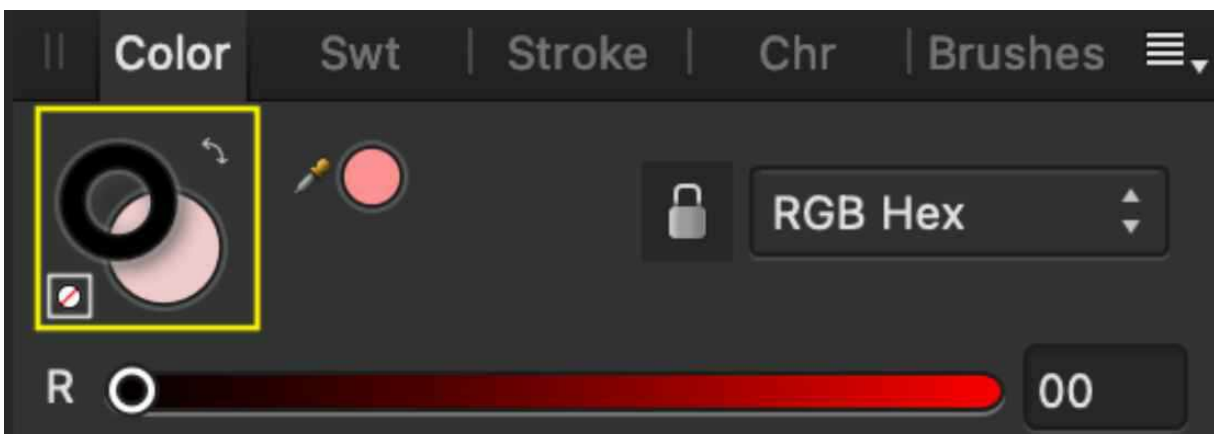


Hmm, the black lines around our clouds look strange. Do you remember what this black line that surrounds the border of an object is called? It's called Stroke and there's an easy way to remove it from an object.

Go to the **Layers Panel** and while *holding-down* the **Shift key**, *click* on the **top** and the **bottom Cloud layer** so all three are highlighted in blue (see our image). If you've already repositioned your cloud layer(s), then just do these steps one layer at a time.



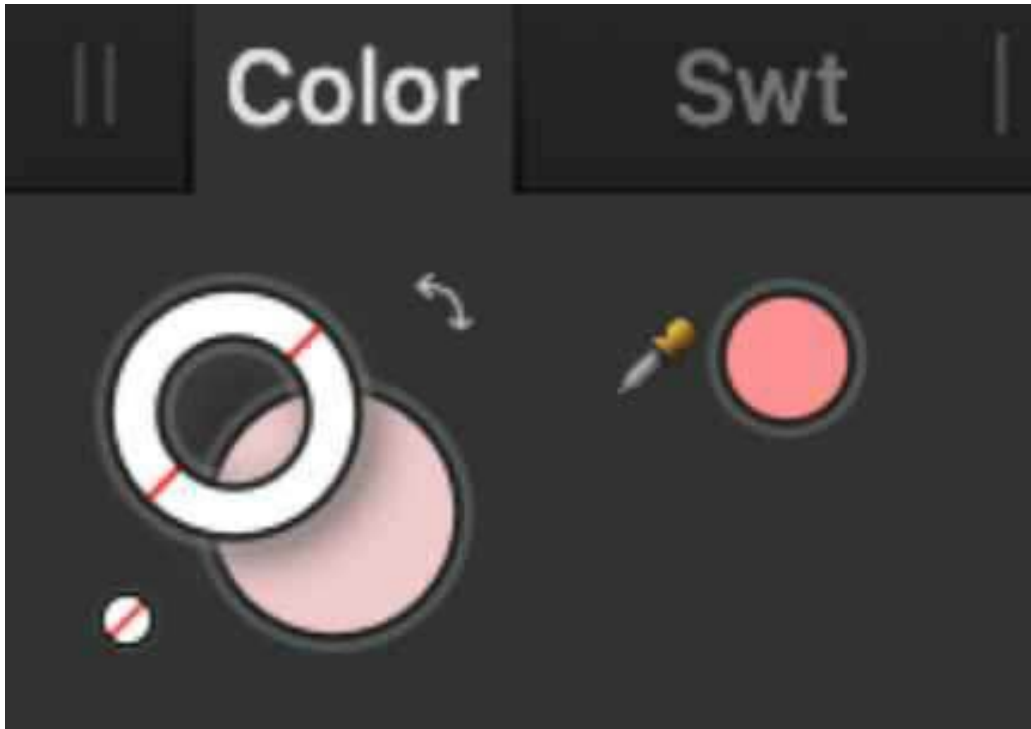
Go to the **Colors Panel** and *click* on the black **Stroke doughnut** so it's positioned in front of the Fill circle (see yellow square).



Click on the **no color icon** (see the white square inside the above yellow

square). This will cause the stroke in all of the selected layers to disappear.

Look at the **Stroke donut**. Do you notice its change? If you clicked on the right icon, the black doughnut will turn white (see this image below).



This is what our clouds look like now without a stroke:



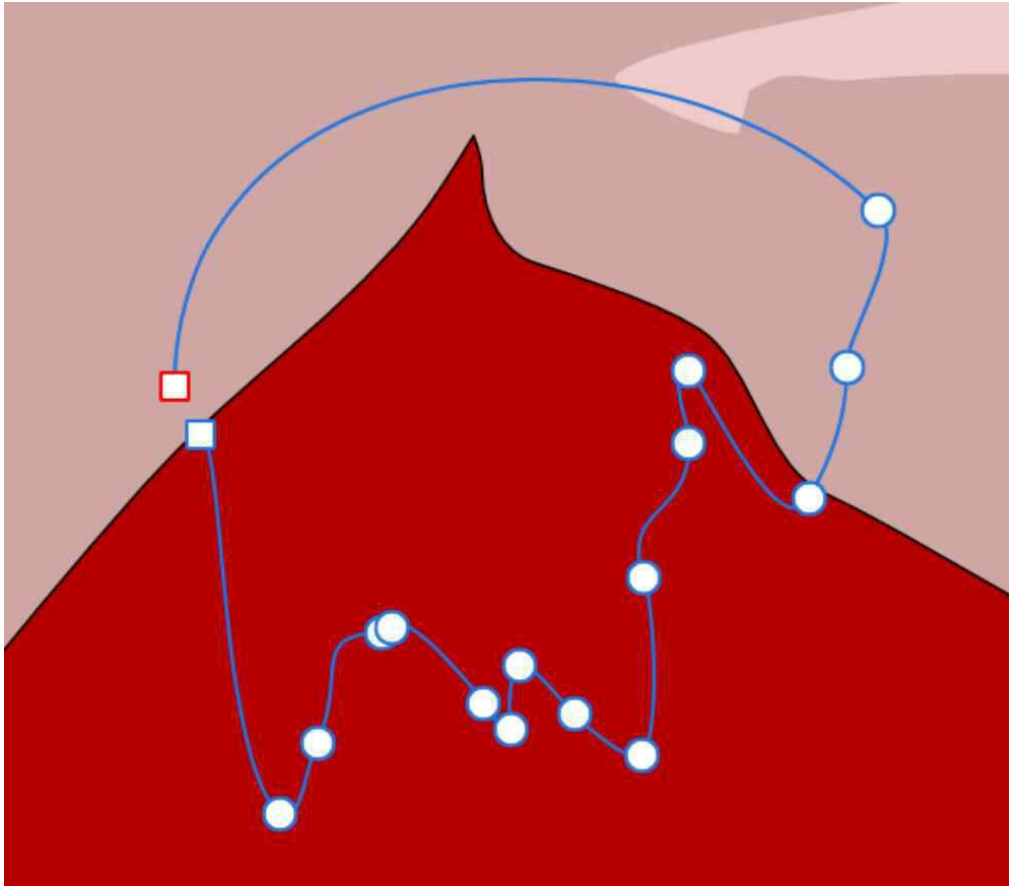
We think they look much nicer now, don't you?

We're almost done, but I think we should add some snow to the tops of our mountain peaks. To do this, we'll again use the Pencil Tool and move these new snow layers below-and-to-the-right of their mountain layers (e.g. make the Child layers of the Mountain layer).

Click on the **Pencil Tool** so it's activated.

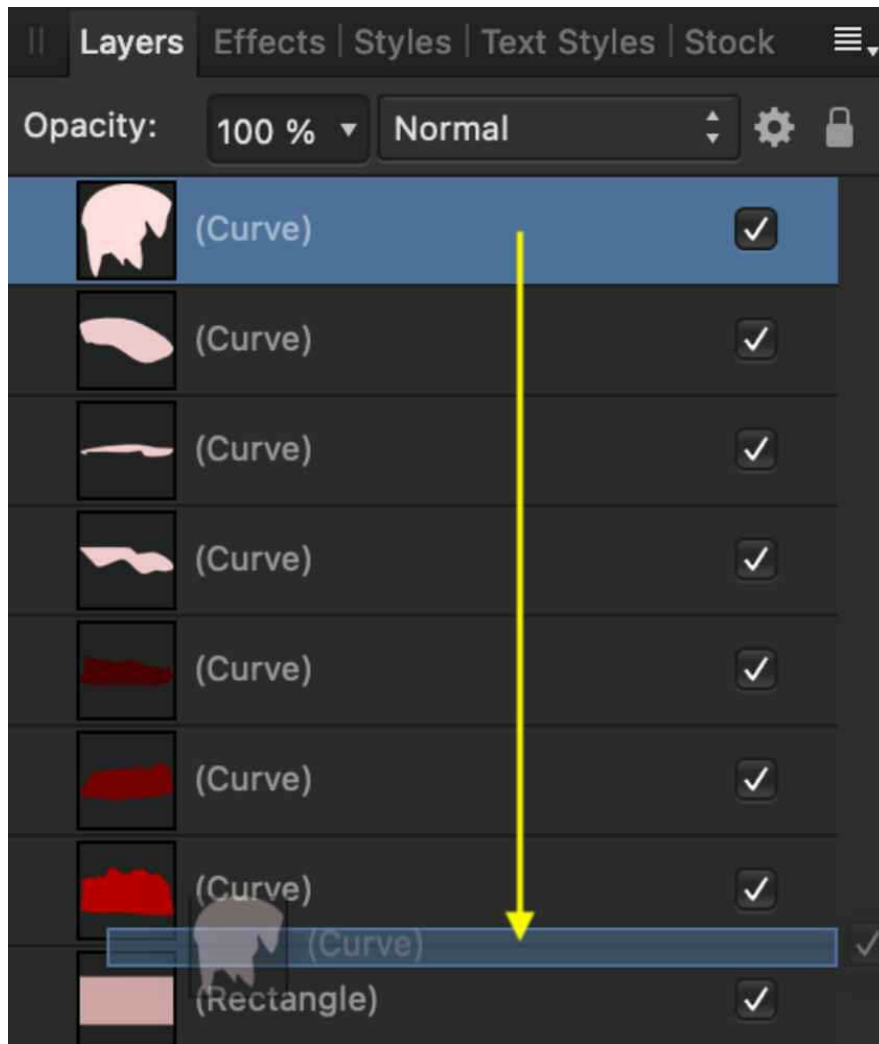
Draw whatever **shape** you think the left-most mountain peak's ice cap should look like. This is what we've drawn. It's totally random. Trust us, it took absolutely no skill. :)

Note: Remember how to tell which node is the starting and ending points?
Answer: Look for the square nodes. The red square node is the finishing point of the drawn shape.

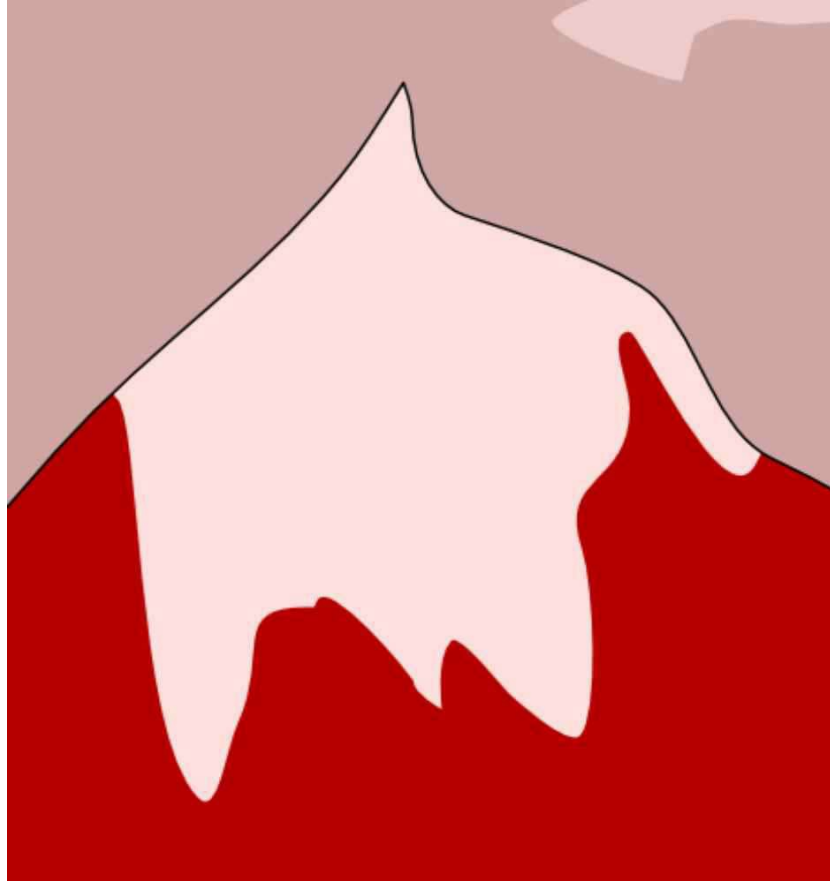


Go to the **Colors Panel** and type **FFE2E2** in the RGB Hex value box. This is almost the same color as our clouds, but a little brighter.

Click & drag this **snow layer** below-and-to-the-right of the mountain layer at the bottom of the Layers Panel (see yellow arrow in the below image for this action). Notice how the left side of the ethereal layer is not all the way to the left, but more towards the middle. This means this moved layer will become a child layer of the mountain layer and the "snow" will only affect the mountain layer and no others.

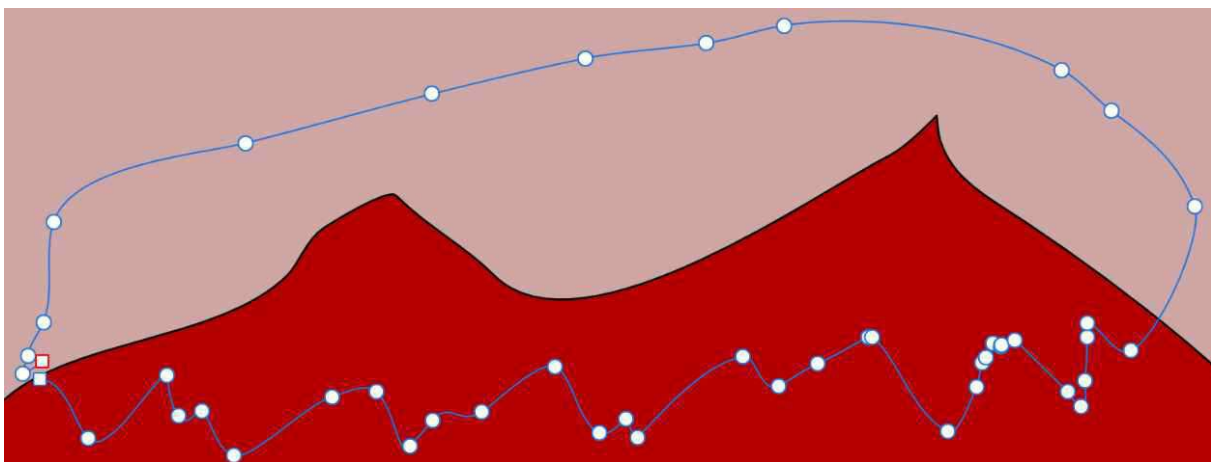


This is what our snow-peaked mountain top looks like now. Notice how the snow is only on the mountain and nowhere else.



Go to the **other two mountain tops** and use the **Pencil Tool** to **draw out** where you want the snow. Repeat the **same steps** we just did to create two more snow-peaked mountains.

This is the shape we made that covers both mountain tops.



After you've changed the color of this new snow peaked mountain and moved its layer to its proper position in the Layers Panel, we are done.

This is our final landscape image. Don't delete your work. We'll continue working with it in our next lesson.



Challenge: Go back and remove the Stroke for all of the contour lines. It may look better.

Finished. This ends this lesson.

Extra: How to Save a Document with its History

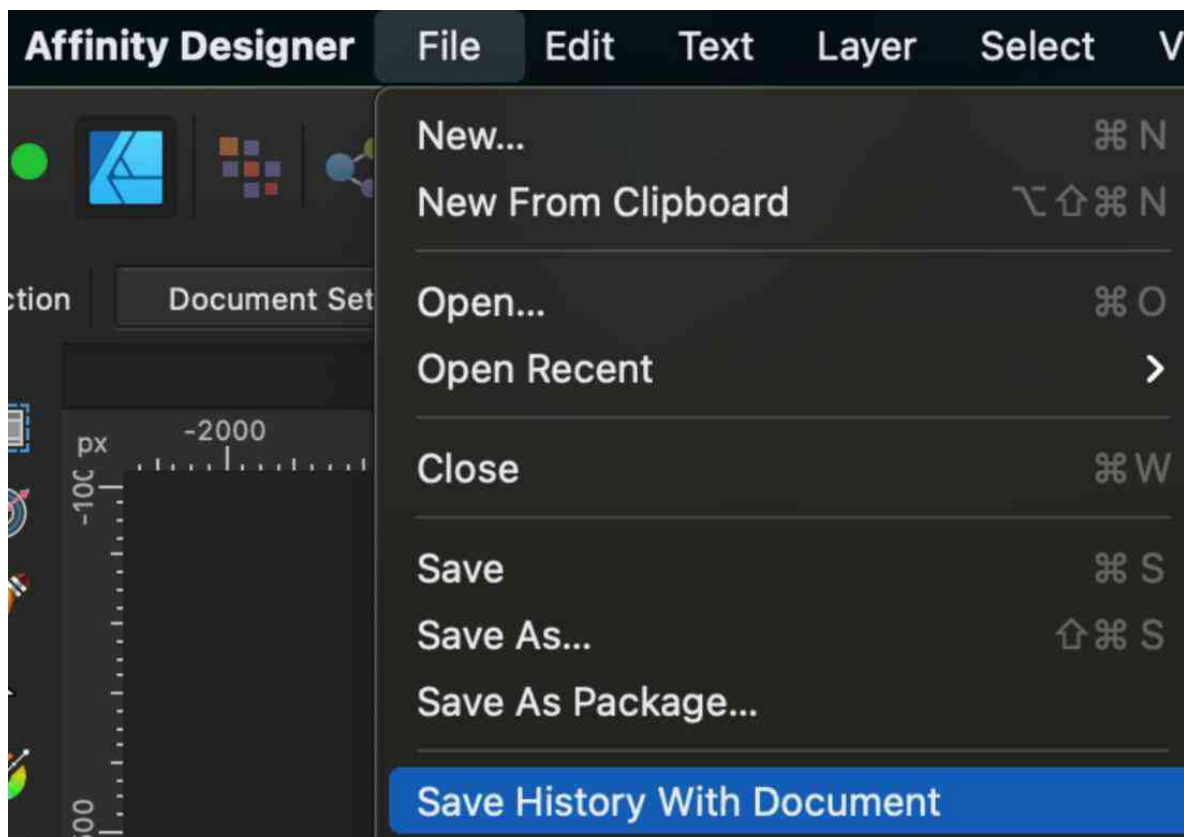
This is a continuation of the previous lesson...

This isn't worthy of being a full lesson, per se, but it is a skill you need to know how to use. Because we use it all the time when doing our effects, we think now is the best time to show you how to do this important task.

The situation is this: You just got done doing an edit and there were a lot of steps you had to take to do it. You want the work to be editable at a later date by you or a team you are working on. To do this, we want to save our document with its full history. That way, you or someone else can go back and see the process you took to create your work and make any necessary changes.

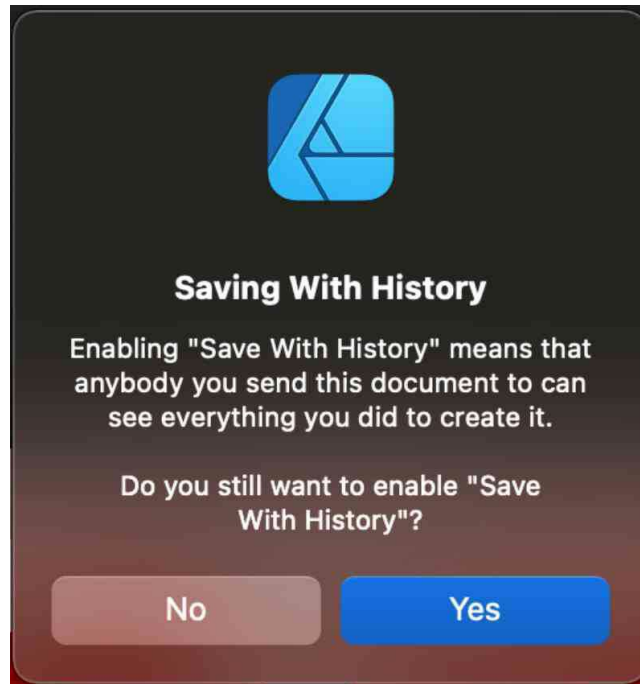
To save your work's history...

Go to the **Menu bar - File - Save History With Document**. Notice how it looks now compared to how it'll look in two more screenshots. Hint, it doesn't have a checkmark in front of it.



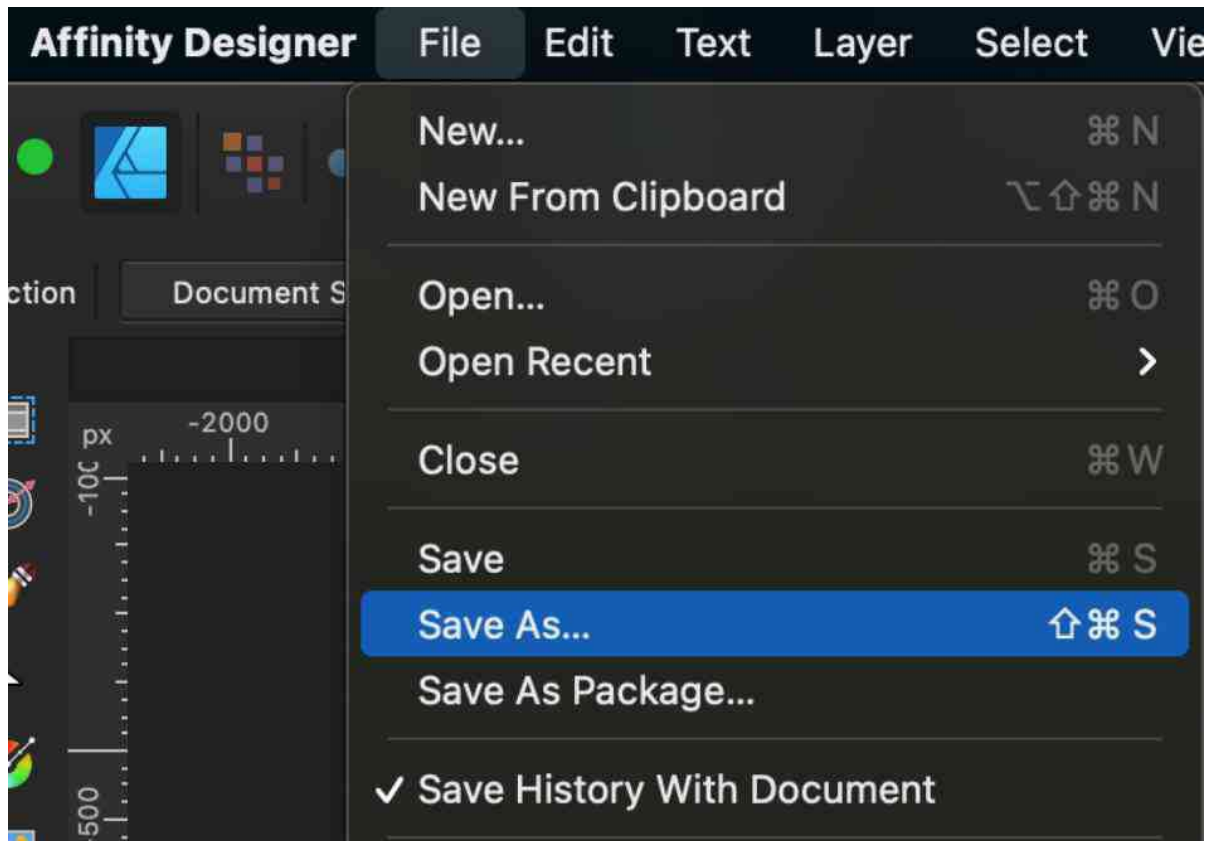
Immediately after clicking on this, a pop-out window will appear (below). It's asking you if you want to enable "Save With History". It asks you this because you need to know that any special ability you may have that sets you apart from your team will be revealed when they can view the entire history of your work and how you did this or that technique. Not every graphic designer is keen on sharing their secrets.

But, for this lesson, *click* on **Yes**.



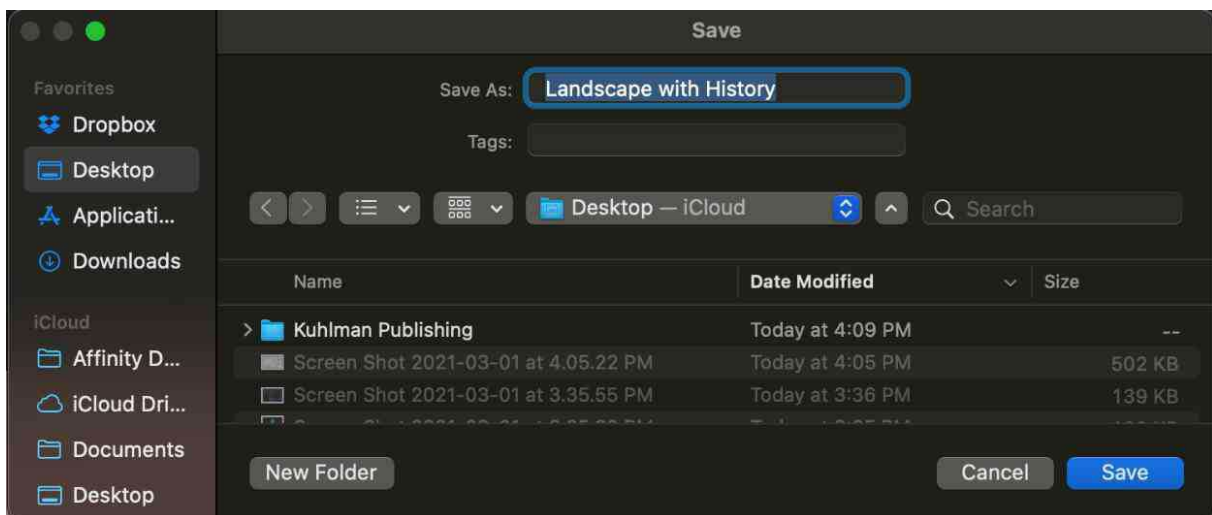
After you do this, nothing will change - or so it seems.

Go back to the **Menu bar - File - Save As...** Notice how there is now a checkmark to the left of the "Save History With Document" line. Now, when you click Save As... the history will also be saved along with the final image.

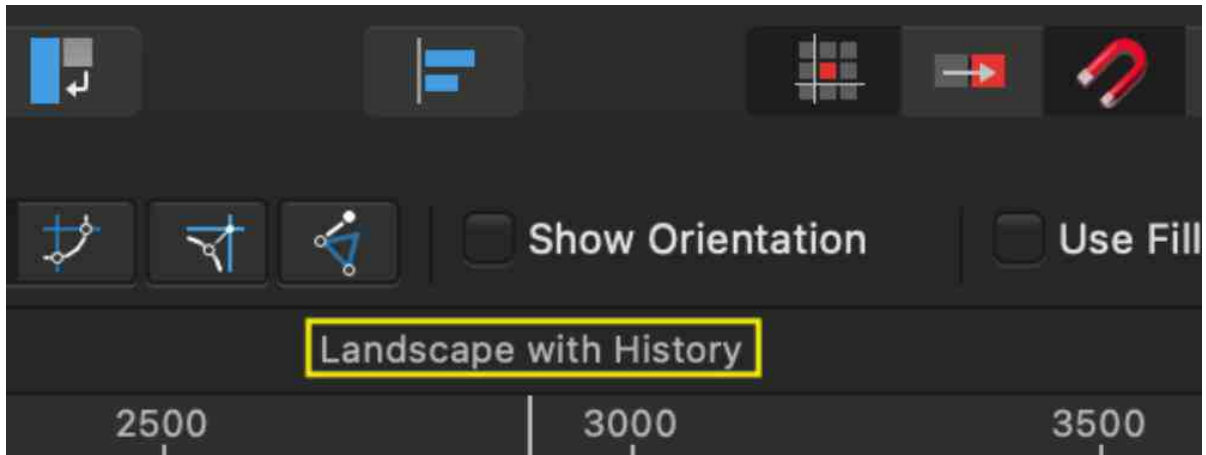


Type **Landscape with History** or any name for your file.

Press **Save** when done (blue button in the lower right-hand corner).



After you press Save go to the document's tab (located above the canvas and below the Contextual Toolbar). You'll now see the new name you've given your work.



In the next lesson, where you'll learn to colorize objects using a simple technique, we'll come back to this document and add some objects (trees) to it. So, just leave this document alone and turn the page and start on the next lesson.

Finished. This ends this extra lesson.